

OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY
Summary of State Board of Education Agenda Items
August 15-16, 2013

OFFICE OF ACCREDITATION

18. Approval of establishment of the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma
(Has cleared the Administrative Procedures Act process with public comments)

On June 6, 2013, the Commission on School Accreditation approved the proposal for the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma.

Recommendation: Approval

Back-up material attached



**Approved by the Commission on School Accreditation
June 6, 2013**

Item 18:

Discussion of State Board of Education Policy for the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma

Mississippi Early Exit Diploma

In a departure from tradition, in which students advance based on "seat time" or how much time they spend in a classroom, Mississippi Early Exit Diploma offers students the opportunity to advance based on their mastery of the curriculum. A key feature of the model provided for the Mississippi State Board of Education Early Exit Diploma, a performance-based diploma available to students on a voluntary basis beginning in the 2013-2014 academic year.

Qualification for a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma signifies to students that they are ready to do college-level work without remediation and opens up a variety of education and career pathways within and beyond high school.

Mississippi Early Exit Diploma Requirements

In order to qualify for a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma, students must meet college and career qualification scores in all core content areas on a series of end-of-course exams and the required benchmarks for college readiness on the ACT or Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) approved college entrance exam. Students take exams offered by Cambridge International Examinations or ACT Quality Core, depending on which of the approved aligned instructional system the school selected as part of the Early Exit initiative. These exams are typically taken during the first 2-3 years of high school.

The exams measure student progress towards college and career readiness and allow students to prove in-depth learning in a variety of ways – by demonstrating their skills in writing, analysis, and problem-solving. The exams assess whether or not students have sufficiently mastered the core subjects they have studied and tells students early in high school where they stand relative to college and career readiness.

A key feature of Early Exit is that students are able to take the time they need individually to reach the goal of college and career readiness. Students who don't yet demonstrate readiness will receive personalized additional support from their school and will have an opportunity to re-take the exams and qualify for the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma in either the 11th or 12th grade.

The Mississippi State Board of Education will adopted Mississippi Early Exit Diploma- and career-readiness qualification scores for English and Mathematics. The Board will adopt qualification scores for additional required subject areas, including history, sciences, and the arts, in 2012-2013. The qualification scores reflect the best empirical data on the actual literacy and numeracy requirements of the initial credit-bearing courses in open-admissions postsecondary institutions.

A student may qualify for a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma by meeting the following subject area requirements within an approved aligned instructional system and earning the 17.5 Carnegie Units:

- Two credits of English;
- Three credits of mathematics;
- Two credits of science, including lab-based science, engineering or information technologies;
- Two and one-half credits of social studies
- One credit of fine arts
- One credit of health and physical education
- One credit of business technology
- Five credits of electives

Credits within the Early Exit model are performance based. Students fulfill credit requirements for the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma by meeting the college readiness qualification scores on the end-of-course exams and IHL approved benchmark test.

Students that satisfy all the criteria for a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma are exempt from the minimum course of study requirements and SAPT2 test score requirements for a traditional high school diploma outlined in the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2012*.

Education Pathways Within and Beyond High School

Once students qualify for the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma, they are able to choose freely from many education options within and beyond high school. These options include:

- Remain in high school and take an “upper division” program of demanding academic courses and exams, such as Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate or Cambridge International Examinations, that will prepare them for some of the most selective colleges in the world.
- Remain in high school and participate in programs of study already available through the home high school or district, such as dual enrollment courses or specialized STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programs.
- Enroll in a full-time career and technical education program offered on a community college campus, a high school campus, a joint technical education district campus or any combination of these campuses.
- Graduate from high school with the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma and go to community college.

**GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS
MISSISSIPPI EARLY EXIT DIPLOMA**

**SENIORS OF SCHOOL YEAR 2013-2014
(Entering ninth graders in 2011-2012)**

Qualification for a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma signifies to students that they are ready to do college-level work without remediation and opens up a variety of education and career pathways within and beyond high school.

In order to qualify for a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma, in addition to the earning the Carnegie Units listed below students must meet college and career qualification scores in all core content areas on a series of end-of-course exams and/or the required benchmarks for college readiness on the ACT or Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) approved college entrance exam.

CURRICULUM AREA	CARNEGIE UNITS	REQUIRED SUBJECTS
ENGLISH	2	English II (equivalent Course)
MATHEMATICS	3	Algebra I (Equivalent Course)
SCIENCE	2	Biology I (Equivalent Course)
SOCIAL STUDIES	2.5	1 World History 1 U.S. History (Equivalent Courses) ½ Mississippi Studies
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	1	Any combination of health and Physical Education
BUSINESS & TECHNOLOGY	1	ICT II,/STEM/Technology Discovery
THE ARTS	1	Any approved 500.000 course or completion of the 2-course sequence for Computer Graphics Technology I and II
ELECTIVES	5	(Should focus on college admission or national certification requirements)
TOTAL UNITS REQUIRED	17.5	

From: Karen Bryant [<mailto:karen.bryant@smithcountyschools.net>]

Sent: Friday, July 19, 2013 10:59 AM

To: Paula Vanderford

Subject: Re: [ms_principals] Approval of Proposed Revisions to Process Standard 20 and Appendix A

Ms. Vanderford,

I work in the Smith County School District, but I am writing as a parent. My daughter is a senior at Taylorsville and meets the qualification for early exit except for a Fine Art. She waited on this course in hopes that we would add show choir or drama and took extra science courses early instead of a fine art. She has had Biology I & II, Human A&P and physics already. She is taking College Algebra this summer and plans to take english comp I and II online during the year...but she has not had general music, which is what she will have to take this year! She has taken several years of piano and is competing in the Distinguished Young Woman state competition this week - playing the piano...but she has not taken general music. Do you get my point? Could she semi-qualify by taking general music 1st period and take dual enrollment courses after that. Does this mean that her schedule could have college credit courses replace Senior English, Spanish, and Government? Would we have to pay tuition for this? I have loads of questions, but school starts in 2 weeks!!

thanks and this looks like something that will definitely benefit MS students,
karen bryant

On Fri, Jul 19, 2013 at 9:52 AM, Paula Vanderford <PVanderford@mde.k12.ms.us> wrote:

Today, the State Board of Education (SBE) approved the proposed revisions to Process Standard 20 and Appendix A of the *Mississippi Public School Accountability Standards, 2012*. The proposed revisions will be effective upon the completion of the Administrative Procedures Act Process (APA) for school year 2013-2014. Please see the attached memo detailing the APA process and the proposed revisions. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Morgigno, Ray" <rmorgigno@pearl.k12.ms.us>
Date: July 22, 2013, 9:08:03 AM CDT
To: "PVanderford@mde.k12.ms.us" <PVanderford@mde.k12.ms.us>
Subject: Graduation Revisions on process standard 20

Hey Paula,

I was just reading the proposed changes for the early graduation option. I strongly urge our state to really step back and consider what this could do to high schools and more importantly, students in Mississippi. As a parent, I have an upcoming 8th grader that could probably pass the ACT requirements right now. There is absolutely no way that he will be emotionally, socially, or mature enough to leave high school at 15 or 16. This would be the case for most every child that would have the academic ability to pass these tests. However, many parents and students will not see that. Do we really want 19 year old college graduates? I think we are forgetting that high school is more than just the academic experience. It is a time for kids to learn how to deal with relationships, a time to develop their interests and talents, and to enjoy the experience of being a teenager.

Next, I believe that we need to think about the impact this could have on our high schools. If we take our top students out of the high schools, there goes more than just your strong academics, there goes the strong culture that schools often have. These upper level students many times make up the leadership on a campus with clubs, student government, extra-curriculars, etc. We already have it where kids can get numerous credits in Junior High and can graduate in 3 years if they so choose. I believe that we can challenge our students and continue to work with dual enrollment if they want to experience the college level coursework. However, we need to also consider the maturity level of these kids and work to develop that as much or more as the academics. Most any of us can remember learning leadership lessons from sports, clubs, etc. in high school. We need to tread softly on totally getting rid of the high school experience. As stated earlier, we have multiple pathways for graduation now. It seems that we really need to slow down, take a look at what all we have in place, and move a little slower before jumping on another new ship.

I apologize for the rant.

Thanks,

Ray Morgigno

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Brantley, Lundy" <lbrantley@pearl.k12.ms.us>
Date: July 23, 2013, 8:02:50 AM CDT
To: "Paula Vanderford (PVanderford@mde.k12.ms.us)" <PVanderford@mde.k12.ms.us>
Cc: "Brantley, Lundy" <lbrantley@pearl.k12.ms.us>, "Morgigno, Ray" <rmorgigno@pearl.k12.ms.us>, "Morgigno, Gina" <gmorgigno@pearl.k12.ms.us>
Subject: Grad. Concerns

Dr. Vanderford,

I would like to express some concerns about the graduation requirements (Approval of Proposed Revisions to Process Standard 20 and Appendix A) that are being considered.

1. We have so many requirements at this time that it is not necessary to add more.
2. The way this policy reads, a student can graduate with 17.5 credits whereas a CTE path student has to complete 21. The CTE path requires the least amount of credits at this time and with the new policy, a student that takes the ACT and makes the cuts scores only have to receive 17.5.
3. It seems as if we are trying to "push" students out the door before they are ready. We all know that a 15 year old in college is not a good thing. Cognitively they may be ready, but the maturity level is not there. With the culture as it is now, can you only imagine the temptations that a 15 year old would have vs. starting to school at 18 or 19.
4. It seems as if we are saying the ACT is more important than high school and that if we do well on the ACT we can "clep" high school.
5. As far as test scores go, if you lose your top 25 students, then you lose 100 advanced scores on the state tests. We will still be held accountable for scores and people will wonder... "why did your scores go down?" When you lose your best students then your scores will suffer and therefore more scrutiny will be on the school for low test scores. It would be the equivalent to taking away the best players on a football team and still be expected to win a state championship or sending an army to battle without bullets.
6. When you lose your best students then you lose the fabric of your school. They are usually your student council members, band members, and athletes. The meaning of high school is "cheapened".
7. We already have college options in our curriculum with Dual Credit/Dual Enrollment. Our curriculum has 27 hours of Dual Credit. This gives the student a chance to receive college credit while still in high school with adult supervision.
8. We have 22 year old college graduates that can't find a job. Imagine how hard it would be for a 19 year old college graduate to find a job.
9. This appears to be part of the dismantling of our public schools.

I appreciate your time and consideration.

Lundy Brantley, Ph.D

Principal

Pearl High School

The mission of Pearl High School is to prepare each student to become a lifelong learner, achieve individual goals, and positively impact a global society.

Dr. Vanderford,

After reading the second paragraph several times, I read the second sentence to say that we could use these proposed revisions for the upcoming 2013-2014 school year. Am I correct in my understanding, that we can go ahead and begin using these changes this school year? I would love to allow the counselors to implement these changes.

Please advise,

Christi

Christi Spinks
Assistant Superintendent
Long Beach School District
19148 Commission Road
Long Beach, MS 39560
228-864-1146 office
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Christi.spinks@lbsdk12.com

"The man who does not read good books has no advantage over the man who cannot read them."
Mark Twain

Corinth School District

1204 North Harper Road
Corinth, Mississippi 38834

Telephone (662) 287-2425
Fax (662) 286-1885

EDWARD LEE CHILDRESS, Ed.D.
Superintendent

August 13, 2013

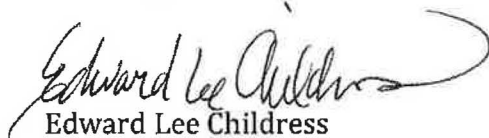
Dr. Paula Vanderford
Office of Accreditation
Mississippi Department of Education
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Vanderford,

Corinth School District fully supports the establishment of the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma. With college and career readiness established by a qualification scores on exit exams, students will be prepared to enter college without remediation. We support the initiative that establishes 17.5 Carnegie units, along with requisite college-ready scores, as the basis for early graduation.

With the rapidly changing global marketplace, we owe it to our students in Mississippi to have the same advantages and opportunities as students in other parts of the world. I whole-heartedly support the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma.

Sincerely,



Edward Lee Childress

ELC/db

Corinth School District

1204 North Harper Road
Corinth, Mississippi 38834

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EDWARD LEE CHILDRESS, Ed.D.
Superintendent

August 13, 2013

Dr. Paula Vanderford
Office of Accreditation
Mississippi Department of Education
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Vanderford,

I have been a high school English teacher for many years. As the 11th and 12th grade English teacher, my experience was often disheartening. I had students who had scored Advanced on all of their state tests who stopped coming to school because of the need to work to support their families. I knew that a high school diploma could ensure better pay and the opportunity to get a higher education, but those students were pulled by the desire to help their families immediately.

The Mississippi Early Exit Diploma is a great option for those advanced students who are stuck in a cycle of poverty. They cannot get ahead because they do not have degrees, yet they have to work early to assist their families. If a student is ready for college or a career, that student, based on meeting the requirements on end of course assessments and earning 17.5 credits, should be able to move forward and become a productive citizen. This will allow the student the opportunity to have future advancements that are not permitted when he drops out.

I feel strongly that our students deserve option of a Mississippi Early Exit Diploma.

Sincerely,



Dana Miller Bullard
Cambridge Curriculum Coordinator

Corinth High School
Academic and Performing Arts Center
1310 Harper Road
Corinth, Mississippi 38834

Telephone (662) 286-1000

August 13, 2013

Dr. Paula Vanderford
Office of Accreditation
Mississippi Department of Education
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Paula Vanderford:

As the high school counselor at Corinth High School I have been actively involved in the implementation of the Cambridge curriculum and the NCEE pilot program. I am excited that our school system is utilizing a rigorous curriculum which will allow students to have an opportunity to exhibit college and career readiness without having to complete the traditional graduation path.

The early graduation diploma allows students have the opportunity to excel within the high school setting and then reap the benefits of a community college before entering a university or the workforce. Many students identify and are excited about their college/career plan when they enter high school. The early graduation option allows these students to move forward with their goals and aspirations.

I support the early graduation option and I hope more schools recognize the value and merit of this option.



Jennifer Martindale
Jennifer Martindale
School Counselor

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August 13, 2013

Dr. Paula Vanderford
Office of Accreditation
Mississippi Department of Education
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Vanderford,

As the principal of Corinth High School, I can tell you that the early option diploma is greatly needed. I fully support the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma because it not only ensures that students are college and career ready, it also allows for flexibility in seat time.

Many students in our state are dealing with issues of poverty, and they need the incentive to work hard – and have that work pay off. By requiring 17.5 Carnegie units and the passing of exams given to establish that the student is college ready, this diploma option will give our students the initiative to be successful.

I fully support the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Russ Elam". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a long, sweeping underline.

Russ Elam
Principal, Corinth High School

RE/db

1310 Harper Road
Corinth, MS 38834

August 13, 2013

Dr. Paula Vanderford
Office of Accreditation
P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Vanderford:

This marks my thirteenth year working for the Corinth School District, and I can honestly say that the Cambridge Program has made a lasting impression on me. This is also my third year working as the ninth grade IGCSE First Language English teacher. Needless to say, it has been quite a journey.

I have first-hand witnessed how students have excelled in this program. At first, the ninth graders struggled through the challenging vocabulary, complex text, and rigorous assignments. The students that started out with this program now know what is expected of them. They understand the degree of excellence. These students have acquired higher order (critical) thinking skills; they have gained insight on how to question effectively and rationalize their responses. Their comprehension skills have been sharpened, and they have been taught how to truly analyze a work. Based on these specific reasons as well as others, I am fully convinced that once students complete their IGCSE coursework and examinations successfully, they are college and career ready.

Without any need for remediation, these students will succeed in any of the accelerated content areas or early graduation options. Thank you for the opportunity to lend my support to the Mississippi Early Exit Diploma.

Sincerely,



Gennella Graham
Ninth Grade English Teacher
Corinth High School

Date: 8/13/2013

Dr. Paula Vanderford
Educational Bureau Manager
Department of Education, Office of Accreditation
Post Office Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205

Dear Dr. Vanderford:

I am writing in support of early graduation requirements for career and college ready high school students. High School is a magical time of crisp fall evenings, football, sweethearts, friends and memories that last a lifetime. While the social aspects of our school systems are legendary and sealed in iconic cultural concrete we have allowed some of our more deserving priorities to slip into disrepair.

We live in a global community that is increasingly being dominated by emerging nations. We approach education too often with a decades-old philosophy. As we hold on to our personal security blankets of four years, specific electives, and outdated methodologies other nations are leaving us in the dust. We have to develop a path and plan for students who know their future career trajectory that is not rooted in tradition but rather common sense.

If a student knows that they want to be a lab technician, engineer, pharmacy technician, auto mechanic or any other of the STEM careers, should we (in good conscience) hold them back out of an outdated pacing tradition? Should we not set assessment standards that are legitimate with high expectations for required completion and which clearly reflect a readiness for college and career? Should we not allow them to enter the workforce as trained productive taxpaying citizens now capable of several additional years of public contribution and retirement planning?

I firmly believe the Cambridge curriculum provides a legitimate rigorous alternative to our traditional pathway. Internationally benchmarked, it provides our students with the most comprehensive way (at least that I have seen in my educational career) to assess their readiness for the real world. Real world application and analysis combine to develop a student more prepared for an empowered future. Lacking in "spoon-fed" instruction, lacking in "test-driven" learning and lacking in lower level skill development all contribute to the ability of the IGCSE and AICE programs to help our students reach a competency rarely reached within traditional Mississippi curricula and methodologies.

I am in full support of an early graduation pathway for students who truly exhibit career and college readiness. Why tie our most precious Mississippi resource, our children, to the shortcomings of an aging system?

Sincerely,



Philip Jensen

AICE U.S. History and IGCSE American History Teacher

Dear Dr. Vanderford,

As a classroom teacher and parent with children currently involved in Corinth's Cambridge AICE program, it is my distinct pleasure to give personal perspective to a program I wholeheartedly believe in and support. The rigorous standards created by the Cambridge curriculum gives students the option of navigating their own college or career path with an emphasis on what will be of benefit to them.

Successful completion of the Cambridge program equip students not only with a comprehensive knowledge base of core subject matter but the understanding, problem solving, and analytical thinking skills needed in today's competitive, globally driven workplace.

Statistics from the Department of Labor indicate that there is an increasing demand for individuals in the workplace with skill sets, which can be acquired only through very specific vocational and technical programs. Students demonstrating mastery of the of the core subjects, have accumulated 17.5 Carnegie Units and a desire to take advantage of the opportunities offered at various career and vocational programs are ideally suited for the Cambridge early graduation career ready option. It is our responsibility to meet the needs of every student in an ever changing and globally competitive job market. As educators we must empower our students with the tools needed to rise to the challenge. The future of our educational system and our nation's children depend on our commitment to meeting their needs.

Sincerely,

Charles D. Carpenter